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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAKU 000298

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY SPLIT, KICKED OUT OF
AZADLIQ BLOC

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[B](#). 06 BAKU 194

[C](#). BAKU 143

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JASON P. HYLAND PER 1.4(B,D)

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: After weeks of mudslinging in the press, the long-troubled Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) has functionally split into two parties: one headed by exiled Chair Rasul Guliyev, the other by Acting Chair and party founder Sardar Jalaloglu. The split will likely become official in the party's May annual summit, as there seems to be no chance of re-unification. This split appears to be a division of those devoted to Guliyev as an individual versus those committed to the principles on which the party was founded. On March 6 the Azadliq bloc leadership decided to formally suspend ADP's coalition membership. ADP's split comes as little surprise because of long-churning rumors of internal turmoil, but its suspension from Azadliq contrasts sharply with the bloc's public affirmations of unity. The events of the past several weeks are another example of a disjointed, personality-driven opposition that will likely continue to fracture in the run-up to the October 2008 Presidential Elections. END SUMMARY

PARTY BACKGROUND

[2](#). (C) Over the past few months, local press has carried reports of trouble brewing in the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP), one of Azerbaijan's leading opposition parties and member of the Azadliq bloc. ADP is still technically chaired by Rasul Guliyev, a once-powerful cohort of the late former President Heydar Aliyev. Guliyev, former Speaker of Parliament, joined ADP in 1998 after he left Azerbaijan for the U.S., publicly citing medical problems. He was later granted political asylum, and has remained in the U.S. ever since. ADP was created in 1991 by Sardar Jalaloglu, who became First Deputy Chair in 1998 when Ilyas Ismayilov, then-head of the Democratic Reforms Party joined ADP, and co-chaired the united party with the exiled Guliyev. Jalaloglu has been ADP Acting Chair since Ismayilov left in 2000 to create the independent Justice Party.

THE TROUBLE STARTS

[3](#). (C) Although internal problems have been developing inside ADP for years, in the public eye, the trouble began last fall when Jalaloglu called upon the GOAJ to conduct an open political dialogue with the opposition. Guliyev supporters in ADP also began loudly calling for a dialogue; in fact, Jalaloglu told Poloff that they were attempting to compete with him by "trying to be more Catholic than the Pope." Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP) officials told the press that it was nice to see ADP behaving as a "constructive opposition." The

term "constructive opposition" triggered a series of press allegations that ADP was switching its political orientation from opposition to pro-government, even though the other opposition leaders had privately indicated their willingness to conduct such a dialogue (see refs a and b). As Jalaloglu told us in December, ADP did not intend to change its political orientation, rather, it was trying to take a constructive route. He also pointed out that ADP had always been a bit different from the other opposition parties, as it served as an opposition to former President Albufaz Elchibey and later to former President Heydar Aliyev. (NOTE: The "traditional" opposition came to power when Popular Front Party candidate Elchibey was elected to office in 1992.)

14. (C) In January and February, the Jalaloglu faction and the Guliyev faction of ADP waged a very public battle for party control. ADP's Supreme Council met on January 30, and came to several decisions regarding tactics for approaching the GOAJ, continued participation in the Azadliq bloc, and plans for its May annual summit. After the meeting, each side made sharp allegations in the press about the other, resulting in the Supreme Council's "dismissing" Guliyev as Chair and Guliyev's "firing" Jalaloglu from the position of Deputy Chair. Each side claimed the other did not possess the authority to make internal party decisions, and each also claimed to have greater party support than the other. Finally, on February 23, Jalaloglu told us that the party had functionally split, and would likely officially split during ADP's May annual summit. Those who are committed to the principles on which the party was founded seem to be loyal to Jalaloglu, while Guliyev's followers are largely dedicated to him as an individual.

AZADLIQ'S DECISION

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15. (C) While public disputes over ADP's political orientation were ongoing, the Azadliq bloc leadership met several times to determine ADP's status in the coalition. In January, Popular Front Party Chair Ali Kerimli and Azerbaijan Liberal Party Chair Lala Shovket told us that they had spoken with Jalaloglu at length, and that ADP would remain in the bloc. In February, Azadliq formally decided that Jalaloglu's interpretation of ADP's charter was correct, and that Jalaloglu would continue to represent ADP in the bloc, but the leadership would consider allowing a representative from Guliyev's side into the coalition if a new party were formed. However, on March 6, Azadliq leaders decided to formally suspend ADP's membership in the coalition. Kerimli's aide told us that the decision is a result of both the internal disputes - which puts Azadliq in a difficult position - as well as ADP's violation of several principles of the Azadliq charter. According to the aide, in order for membership to be restored, ADP will have to meet a number of requirements that will take time.

JALALOGLU'S ALLEGATIONS

16. (C) Jalaloglu alleges that over the past decade Guliyev has hijacked the party for his own personal gain. Jalaloglu believes that all Supreme Council actions were taken in full accordance with ADP's charter, and that Guliyev was well aware of the principles outlined in the charter. He said that the trouble started when he announced his candidacy for ADP Chair, which would come to a vote in the May annual summit. Jalaloglu said that prior to Guliyev joining ADP, the party was focused on a wide range of issues that affected all Azerbaijanis, but in the time since, ADP has been used as a vehicle for Guliyev's own ambitions. Clearly frustrated, Jalaloglu said that ADP members have put up with ten years of being beaten and detained as a result of protests focused on Guliyev's political situation, and that Guliyev supporters had often used ADP meetings and events to collect money for

Guliyev's personal use. Jalaloglu told Poloff that he plans to return to ADP's pre-Guliyev policies: to focus on issues that are important to the population; to take a more constructive approach with the GOAJ; and to participate in all aspects of the political process. He said that his side will continue to use the ADP name.

GULIYEV'S SIDE

17. (C) Aydin Guliyev, Editor in Chief of Baku Khabar newspaper, former ADP member and staunch Rasul Guliyev supporter, told us that the party started to unravel after the November 2005 Parliamentary Elections when Jalaloglu began to urge Rasul Guliyev to resign chairmanship. Aydin Guliyev believes that most party members will stay with Rasul Guliyev after the split. According to Aydin Guliyev, the Supreme Council's actions have no authority, and Rasul Guliyev was particularly upset with Jalaloglu's repeated calls for an open dialogue with the GOAJ. The Guliyev branch recognizes that Jalaloglu's side will try to function under the ADP name, and although it plans to change some of the symbols associated with the party, the members supporting Guliyev have not yet decided whether to change their faction's party name. (NOTE: Aydin Guliyev was dismissed from ADP in 2005 on allegations of accepting money from GOAJ officials for a seat in Parliament.)

COMMENT

18. (C) After months of public speculation and rumors of internal trouble, ADP's split comes as little surprise, but Azadliq's decision to suspend ADP's membership was in stark contrast to public affirmations of unity from Azadliq's leadership. ADP has not had a wide support base for some time, and its split will cause it to marginalize some of the support that remained. The splits in both Azadliq and ADP are a reminder of the disjointed and personality-driven nature of Azerbaijan's opposition; we are likely to see more of this in the run-up to the October 2008 Presidential Elections.

BIO NOTES

19. (C) Sardar Jalaloglu was born in 1954 in the Babak district of the Azerbaijani exclave Nakhchivan. He is married and has three sons and one daughter. Jalaloglu graduated from Azerbaijan Medical University in 1977, and from 1979 to 1989, was a member of an underground anti-Soviet political group in Nakhchivan. Jalaloglu has been imprisoned three times because

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of his political activities, including his arrest in the aftermath of the October 2003 Presidential Elections. On January 11, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of Jalaloglu, ordering the GOAJ to pay him USD 15,275 for mistreatment in police custody and for failing to properly investigate his case (see ref c). Jalaloglu used increasingly anti-American rhetoric until the autumn of 2006, when his focus shifted to domestic politics. Since that time, his public comments have focused mostly on ADP's internal politics and calling on the GOAJ for an opposition/ruling party dialogue. Jalaloglu speaks Azerbaijani and Russian.

110. (C) Rasul Guliyev was born in 1947 in the Julfa district of Nakhchivan. He is married and has three children. In the late 1960s, Guliyev was involved with anti-Soviet political student groups. He graduated from the Azerbaijan Oil and Chemistry Institute (now the Oil Academy) in 1970, and holds a PhD equivalent in engineering. In 1992, Guliyev was appointed Vice President of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan. He was elected Speaker of Parliament in 1993 and re-elected in 1995. After resigning the post of Speaker in 1996, Guliyev publicly cited medical problems and traveled to

the U.S. in 1996, where he applied for political asylum. From the U.S., he joined ADP in 1998, and was elected co-chair several months later. Guliyev became sole party chair in 2000. Prior to the November 2005 Parliamentary Elections, Guliyev promised to return to Baku, but was detained en route during a detour to Ukraine, and returned to the U.S. Guliyev speaks Azerbaijani, Russian, and some English.

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